

Anorexia as uncommon side effect of levetiracetam treatment

In epilepsy

Karolina Siedlaczek, Aleksandra Chmielecka

Medical University of Białystok

Tutors: associate professor Alina Kulakowska, phd Katarzyna Kapica-Topczewska, Medical University of Białystok

Rationale:

Epilepsy is a group of chronic, neurological disorders characterized by recurrent, unprovoked seizures. A diverse clinical picture of epilepsy depends not only on the primary location of abnormal electrical activity in the brain, but also how long it lasts, the way it spreads and quantity of brain cells it affects. On the grounds of these aspects particular types of epilepsy were defined. Although proper diagnosis of epilepsy type is a key to choose an appropriate treatment, sometimes it is very difficult, especially for patients who have more than one type of seizure. As anti-epileptic drugs are the main form of treatment for people with epilepsy, it is essential to take under consideration pros and cons of each medication before prescribing.

Objective

The aim of the study was to demonstrate uncommon side effects of anti-epileptic drugs.

Material and methods

A 75-years-old woman with 2-year history of focal complex seizures was admitted to the Department of Neurology because of the reduced appetite, anorexia, nausea, loss of the body weight (5 kg in 2 months), memory deterioration (6 months) and general weakness.

One year ago patient was hospitalized because of the generalized seizures and she also reports two episodes of absence seizures that came afterwards last year. The patient was treated with Carbamazepine and Valproic acid what led to hair loss. When she was admitted to the Clinic for eating disorders diagnostics she has been taking levetiracetam for one year. The clinical examination revealed moderate malnutrition and significant subcutaneous body fat loss. BMI = 17,6. In the EEG, in fronto-temporal-centro-parietal lobes bilaterally were registered theta waves, sometimes with sharp character. MRI did not reveal any significant abnormalities. During the hospitalization, lamotrigine was added to the treatment and the dose of levetiracetam was reduced. As a result of itchy skin that lamotrigine caused after 5 days of pharmacotherapy another anti-epileptic drug - lacosamide was applied instead. The patient did not demonstrate any side effects of a new medication and was discharged from the hospital in a good physical and mental condition.

Results

Besides commonly side effects of levetiracetam e.g. sleepiness, headache, asthenia, tiredness, rhinitis and pharyngitis there are also uncommon ones, which also should be taken under consideration. One of them is anorexia, which can become a life-threatening condition, especially for the elderly people.

Conclusions

Levetiracetam is a relatively new medication. The patients, who undergo the levetiracetam treatment should be carefully monitored.